

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:**

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (previously presented): An optical fiber assembly, comprising:  
  
a fiber bundle having an outer diameter; and  
  
a first optical fiber having an outer diameter that is at least equal to the outer diameter of the fiber bundle, said first optical fiber having a cladding and a core, and at least a first fiber of said fiber bundle having a core, wherein the fiber bundle is spliced to the first optical fiber such that said cores are optically coupled, and such that optical power in others of the fibers of said fiber bundle is coupled into said cladding, said first optical fiber being tapered at a location apart from said splice.
2. (original): The optical fiber assembly according to claim 1, wherein the fiber bundle comprises at least one of (1) multimode pump fiber pigtails; and (2) one or more single mode, few moded or multimode fibers carrying light at a signal wavelength.
3. (previously presented): The optical fiber assembly according to claim 1, wherein the fiber bundle comprises a plurality of fibers arranged about a central fiber, and the central fiber is one of a single mode fiber, a few-moded fiber and a multimode fiber.
4. (previously presented): The optical fiber assembly according to claim 1, wherein the fiber bundle comprises a plurality of fibers arranged about a central fiber, and the plurality of fibers are arranged in a predetermined pattern around the central fiber.

5. (original): The optical fiber assembly according to claim 4, wherein a holder maintains the fiber bundle in a hexagonal arrangement.

6. (original): The optical fiber assembly according to claim 4, further comprising a plurality of filler fibers that maintains the fiber bundle in said predetermined pattern.

7. (original): The optical fiber assembly according to claim 1, further comprising a capillary that maintains the fiber bundle in a predetermined arrangement.

8. (original): The optical fiber assembly according to claim 7, wherein the capillary has a lower refractive index than the cladding of the fibers in the fiber bundle.

9. (original): The optical fiber assembly according to claim 1, wherein the first optical fiber has one of a single mode core, a few-moded core, and a multimode core; and wherein the first optical fiber is a double clad fiber.

10. (previously presented): The optical fiber assembly according to claim 1, wherein the first optical fiber is a double clad fiber with said core doped with rare earth ions.

11. (cancelled)

12. (previously presented): The optical fiber assembly according to claim 1, further comprising a second optical fiber, wherein the taper is sized so the first optical fiber can be spliced to the second optical fiber.

13. (original): The optical fiber assembly according to claim 12, wherein the second optical fiber has one of a single mode, few moded and multimode core.

14. (canceled).

15. (canceled).

16. (previously presented): A method of producing an optical fiber assembly, comprising:

providing a fiber bundle having an outer diameter; and

splicing a first optical fiber to said fiber bundle; wherein said first optical fiber has an outer diameter which is at least equal to the outer diameter of said fiber bundle, wherein the fiber bundle is first fused at one location and then cleaved at the fused location to form fiber bundle ends for splicing, and

tapering said first optical fiber at a location apart from the splice.

17. (canceled)

18. (original): The method claimed in claim 16, wherein said splicing step is carried out by a fusion arc.

19. (original): The method claimed in claim 16, wherein said splicing step is carried out using resistance heating.

20. (original): The method claimed in claim 18, further including the step of providing a capillary surrounding said fiber bundle and said first optical fiber, providing arc-entrance apertures in said capillary, and fusing said capillary to said fiber bundle and said first optical fiber during said splicing.